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of deterring through fear varies too much according to all the relations of the individual. Their evils certainly do not act as spurs to reform. Almost no one believes any longer in their justice. We ought to decide to drop entirely the aim of inflicting evil, and that is the essence of punishment. Justice will demand that whoever has committed injury should make compensation for the injury, and, perhaps, still more than that. Denial of liberty for a time should have its meaning only as a condition for the discharge of these duties, where it cannot also serve as an education (and this may be limited to persons under age, otherwise it might require the assent of the subject). This hard duty will have more force as a deterrent than threatened punishment. In this way it may come about in practice, that the criminals by nature and profession would be placed in lasting confinement as the condition suited to them. Whoever forces himself to that, because it is more attractive to him than repellent, gives evidence in that very preference that his moral or social condition is diseased. But all these reforms will at the same time tend towards a research for other means of preventing crime than can be found in the threatened or real consequences of what he has done.

FERDINAND TONNIES.

UNIVERSITY OF KIEL.

THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF SOPHOKLES.

"SOPHOKLES paints men as they ought to be, I paint them as they are," is said to have been the remark of his younger rival and contemporary. Sophokles was more an artist than Æschylos; but the moral world remained for him, as for the older poet, the sphere of tragedy; his works are dramas, but the motives they use and the interest they excite and the high purposes of their author are all drawn from the moral relations of men. In examining the ethical teaching of Sophokles, therefore, our work is not simply that of literary criticism, but rather it is a study of the moral sentiments of

the age, as used and as elevated by the dramatist. And this was the earnest, vigorous age of Greek culture. The youthful enthusiasm of Sophokles was kindled by the victories of Greece over the Persians. Then came that wonderful growth of the Athenian democracy, until the Athenian state became all but an empire; in this life he was ever a quiet leader. He was the personal friend and colleague of Perikles, and of Thukydidēs. As an artist on the stage, he could know those artists with the chisel and the brush, to whom the perfection of Greek architecture and sculpture and painting is due. All that was Greek, the strength and the weakness of the Greek character, we find in Sophokles; through him we study his city and his age.

The question whether moral earnestness kept pace with general culture in Greece cannot be answered from tragedy alone. Lax moral practice was the frequent attendant of vigorous moral discussion; rarely would the Sokratic theory of virtue be found less true than in Greece; and tragedy was but one sphere of moral discussion. Again, it is easy to overestimate the moral teaching of such a writer as Sophokles, by reading into his moral terms a meaning only developed in later centuries of moral experience. These questions and difficulties do not lessen the value of tragedy as a witness to ideals, actual even when unconscious, and as the expression of an effort to advance these ideals through the medium of art.

I.

The fundamental fact of ethics is the sense of duty, the ought. The objects prescribed as duty, the mode in which duty is treated, and the phases of it emphasized, vary from time to time; but the fact remains. Philosophic Greek thought discussed the ends of action rather than the conscience which judges action right; but in Greek literature and in Greek life the prominent ethical fact is an æsthetic conscience. The fine nature revolts from sin, and the results of sin; sin is discord in a work of divine art, a discord in the world-harmony, and the very thought of it is repulsive.—The interest of the *Philoktetes* centres about Neoptolemos. He has been brought

from his island home to take Troy, and for this he needs the bow of Herakles. The exiled possessor of this bitterly hates the Greek chiefs, his former comrades, and no persuasion or force can obtain it. Yet we wonder that even an Odysseus seeks to persuade the son of Achilles to deceit; * and Neoptolemos's answer does not disappoint us :

“ I was not born to act with evil arts,
Nor I myself, nor, as they say, my sire.
Prepared am I to take the man by force,
But not by fraud. . . . I wish,
O king, to miss the mark in acting well,
Rather than conquer, acting evilly.” †

Motives of ambition, of respect for the army, and of reverence for the expressed will of the gods, are urged till the young man yields; but throughout the account of his deception we may read between the lines the rebellion of his pure, genuine nature. And at last it is too much; ambition, obedience, everything gives way, and the deception is confessed.

Such a revolt from evil is felt by Elektra, when she contemplates her mother's sin.

“ Ah, day of all that ever came to me,
Most horrible by far !
O night ! O sufferings strange as wonderful,
Of banquets foul and dark !
Dread forms of death which he, my father, saw
Wrought out by their joint hands,
Who, traitorous, murdered him who was my life,
And so brought death to me.” ‡

Her sister lacks the moral force to support her in all the deprivation and suffering caused by this attitude, so that sister and mother alike are objects of scorn, subjected to severest reproaches. Elektra welcomes the thought of death or of solitary banishment, to relieve her from the proximity and thought of such evil.—Such, again, is Antigone's feeling towards a command which she regards as impious. Her whole

* *Iliad*, I., 312-313. † *Phil.* 88-90^a, 94^b-95, Plumptre's translation.

‡ *El.* 201-208.

nature rises in noble scorn at the thought of a brother lying unburied, and all the ties of obedience to the state, care for her own life, and love for her betrothed, are suddenly snapped.

The æsthetic character of this judgment is even better shown in the cases of Aias and of those about Œdipus. Aias, disappointed of a prize, has sought to slay the commanders of the Greek army; but Athene turned aside his blows, so that they fell on the cattle. Coming to himself, he feels that he can neither stay nor go home.

“The shame is past all bearing.” *

His life is marred, the only thing he can do is to end it bravely; and the feeling is strong enough to overcome his love for wife and child.—When Œdipus's sin is revealed, and he appears on the stage with blinded eyes streaming with blood, it is hard to distinguish the moral from the æsthetic effect on the chorus. Jokaste had already committed suicide from horror of her own unconscious deeds, and Œdipus wildly blinds himself on seeing her dead. It is as much the revolting physical aspect of the man as the moral taint which makes them turn from him with the words, *τοίαν φρίκην παρέχεις μοι.*† And in the long life of wandering which followed, it was physical mutilation oftener than moral evil which turned men against him.

Greek excellence lay in fineness of culture. Moral sensibility and sensitiveness was cultivated with delicate sensibility in every line. The feeling of shame‡ rather than conviction of wrong was the result produced by this æsthetic conscience; *moral* perfection was not the controlling element in the ideal. I do not mean that the value of obedience to imposed law was entirely without recognition. The meaning of the *Antigone* lies in the conflict there depicted between this human law and the æsthetic law assigned to the gods. The commands of the ruler and the state demand obedience,§ but every one sympathizes with her who disobeys these laws in

* *Ai.* 466, οὐκ ἔστι τοῦργον τλητόν.

† *Alidōs El.* 249, 607; *Ai.* 1076, 338; *O. K.* 247, 1268.

‡ *O. T.* 1306.

§ *Ant.* 660, 870.

obedience to her conscience. And this same play suggests that fineness of culture, and what I have called the æsthetic conscience, are not necessarily associated with weakness of moral fibre. Antigone dies in the effort to do her duty; Elektra welcomes the thought of death and banishment; Neoptolemos gives up the hope of future glory, all the dream of a young life; it is the *moral* and physical energy of Œdipus which impresses us, in his prosperity and in his blindness. It is devotion to duty which wakens moral enthusiasm, in æsthetic Greek no less than in sterner Teuton.

II.

The moral system. I. Law and justice.

“ Oh that ’twere mine to keep
An awful purity,
In words and deeds whose laws on high are set
Through heaven’s clear æther spread,
Whose birth Olympos boasts,
Their one, their only sire,
Whom man’s frail flesh begat not,
Nor in forgetfulness
Shall lull to sleep of death;
In them our God is great,
In them He grows not old for evermore.”*

Right and justice, the final laws of morality, rest back on the gods, or the reasonable order of things represented by the gods. These laws do not fluctuate with changes in the ideas of the gods, but are rooted in that controlling power which, when regarded as reasonable, is called divine, whatever be its further name. Ancient justice (*δίκη*) is seated in the heavens with Zeus.† Laws (*νόμοι*) rest back on the gods, and for this reason demand obedience.‡ Themis (right instituted by the gods) takes care that the wrong-doer suffer;§ reverence, truth, and faithfulness are *θεμισ*, right by divine institution.|| Eternal, divine law can never be set aside by man. As to Kreon’s commands, Antigone says:

* *O. T.* 863–873. † *O. K.* 1381, sq. ‡ *Ai.* 1343, sq. § *El.* 1064, sq.

|| *Ant.* 880; *O. K.* 1556; *El.* 127; *Phil.* 812. Duty to parents, *Tr.* 809.

"Nor did I deem thy edicts strong enough,
 That thou, a mortal man, should'st overpass
 The unwritten laws of God that know no change;
 They are not of to-day or yesterday,
 But live forever, nor can man assign
 When first they came to being."*

Antigone dies by human law for obedience to divine law, but her course wins moral approval, nay, enthusiasm. Faith in this eternal order of things marks the moral man. Antigone dies in this faith. Elektra endures years of scorn and welcomes the thought of death in this faith. And by his trust in the gods and their oracles Œdipus lives through years of wandering, of exile from society and of suffering in every form, until his sin is atoned for, and he dies a glorious death.

2. Transgression of law is a subject of deep ethical thought; it is the ethical side of sin. Man may use the world for good or evil.

"So, gifted with a wondrous might,
 Above all fancy's dreams, with skill to plan,
 Now unto evil, now to good,
 He turns."†

Transgression of law is sin against the gods;‡ it is folly, § the common disgrace of reasonable beings. ||

The origin and motives of sin were carefully analyzed by the Greeks, and Sophokles emphasizes three allied causes, selfishness, self-assertion, and pride. (a) It is the selfish fondness for luxury (χλιδά)¶ and power which led Polyneikes to cast out his father from the state, and leave him to provide for himself during all the years of wandering. The daughters Antigone and Ismene care for him as best they can. They do the work of sons,** while Polyneikes and Eleokles in selfishness seek their own enjoyment and prosecute their own quarrels at the

* *Ant.* 453-457.

† *Ant.* 365-367.

‡ *Ant.* 1070; *O. T.* 1329; *Ai.* 1129, "Saved by the gods, put not the gods to shame."

§ Cf. the Hebrew idea, *e.g.*, *Ps.* xxxv. 8. *O. T.* 874, 891; *Tr.* 586 and 565; the lustful centaur laid hold of Deianeira with foolish hands.

¶ *O. T.* 1023, 1024.

¶ *O. T.* 888.

** *O. K.* 342, sqq., 425-450.

expense of the Theban state. (b) A more common cause of sin in men who are deemed worthy of the Greek tragedy, is self-assertion. The very fact that a large and vigorous manhood was the Greek ideal of excellence, opened the way for excess in this direction. It is the impetuosity of Aias which urges him to avenge himself on those who had defrauded and dishonored him. The resulting action would have been destructive in the extreme, so that with fine perception Sophokles lets the temper of the man defeat itself. His resentment is too much for him and drives him mad, and is satisfied only by the slaughter of the cattle.—Self-assertion was the cause of Oedipus's sin. He is not responsible for having slain his *father*. But the same impetuous nature which led him to turn from Corinth and his reputed father, led him to slay the old man and his servants at the Three Ways when struck by the charioteer's lash. The second sin, of incest, is but a part of the punishment for this murder, and the quick, impetuous temper which was shown in it. Again we recognize the genius of the poet, when an example of this temperament appears in the very picture of a noble, self-sacrificing king, which is the first half of this tragedy. He anticipates his people in seeking relief for them, and curses the murderer with all the vigor of his nature, but his impetuosity and sensitive temper lead him first to suspect the prophet, then to accuse Kreon and the prophet of an attempt to rouse rebellion and displace him. Jokaste has to point out to him the neglected suffering of his people. The audience see an example of sin, just similar to that which is finally to cause his utter overthrow.

(c) In the mind of a Greek the greatest sin and cause of sin was insolent pride, ὕβρις.

“ But pride begets the mood
Of wanton, tyrant power ;
Pride filled with many thoughts, yet filled in vain,
Untimely, ill-advised,
Scaling the topmost height,
Falls to the abyss of woe,
Where step that profiteth
It seeks in vain to take.” *

* O. T. 873-878 ; Cf. *Ant.* 1348-1352 ; *Ai.* 129-134 ; *Tr.* 280.

In careless presumption Philoktetes enters the shrine of Apollo at Chryse, and suffers ten years in solitude from the bite of the serpent. Kreon is the typical example. Asserting his independence as ruler he makes laws at variance with sacred custom and divine law, and demands absolute obedience to these. He condemns Ismene as well as her sister, until her innocence is finally forced on him. He disregards the pleas of his son betrothed to Antigone. He is blind to the warnings of the prophet, calling him an impostor. And when he finally yields in fright at the divine curses uttered against him, it is too late. Insolence has done its work; he finds Antigone dead; his son commits suicide before his eyes, and his wife hangs herself on hearing it. Only thus is the Greek sense of justice satisfied.

Sin is self-cumulative.

*Τὸ δυσσεβὲς γὰρ ἔργον
μετὰ μὲν πλείονα τίττει, σφετέρῃ δ' εἰκότα γέννη.**

Sin tends to increase sin by calling for revenge. Aias revenges the insult offered him by the Atridæ; Œdipus says, "I did but requite the wrongs I suffered," † and Kreon, "I claim the right of rendering ill for ill." ‡ But we find in Sophokles a deeper thought, that one sin opens the way for a second, that one sin is punished by a second, and the taint lasts till the race is extinct. Ethical thought to-day is individualizing. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And too easily we forget that sin leaves a legacy of evil to the world. The penalty is paid, but the effect remains. The worst penalty of sin is sin.

We have dramas illustrating this in the case of the Pelopidæ, and the Labdakidæ. Pelops won his bride by bribing her father's charioteer, and then slew the latter, and the curses of Myrtilus followed the race. One sin led to another, till Agamemnon found it necessary to sacrifice his daughter to Artemis, till Klytæmnestra, using this as an excuse, joined the plot to slay her husband, and was herself slain with Ægisthos. So in the Theban race, Laios sinned by carrying

* *Æsch. Agam.* 758-760.

† *O. K.* 271.

‡ *O. K.* 953.

off a beautiful boy, some say a son of Pelops. In punishment for this comes another sin,—disobedience to the oracle which warned him against his own child. Œdipus, who was this child, fulfilled the oracle by slaying his father, and marrying one whom he found to be his mother. Of the children by this marriage, the sons perished by each other's hand in contest for the throne of Thebes, and Antigone was put to death for burying the brother to whom Thebes's ruler had denied this honor.

“Blessed are those whose life no woe doth taste !
 For unto those whose house
 The Gods have shaken, nothing fails or curse
 Or woe, that creeps to generations far.
 E'en thus a wave, (when spreads
 With blasts from Thrakian coasts
 The darkness of the deep,)
 Up from the sea's abyss
 Hither and thither rolls the black sand on,
 And every jutting peak,
 Swept by the storm-wind's strength,
 Lashed by the fierce wild waves,
 Reëchoes with the far-resounding roar.” *

3. Retributive justice.

ἀμαρτίαι σφάλλυσσι τὴν σωτηρίαν.†

“Where then the bolts of Zeus,
 And where the glorious Sun,
 If, seeing crimes like these,
 They hold their peace, and hide?” ‡

ἔτι μέγας οὐρανῷ
 Ζεύς, δς ἐφορᾷ πάντα καὶ κρατύνει.‡

The central thought of the Greek religion, as of Greek ethics, is this,—that a penalty of suffering follows sin. It may come early or late, but it is sure.|| Belief in it characterizes the virtuous, religious man; respect for it is the motive of religion; ¶ it is the very core of religiousness and righteousness.

* *Ant.* 583–592.

† *Eriph.* fr. 204.

‡ *El.* 824–826. Cf. *El.* 244, sqq., and *O. K.* 621, sqq., and *O. K.* 895.

§ *El.* 174, 175.

|| *Ant.* 1103; *O. K.* 1536.

¶ *Ai.* 1036, sqq.

Distributive justice, like law itself, centres in Zeus, but it often receives a personification of its own. It is called Nemesis: ἡ θεῶν βία καὶ νέμεσις, οἵπερ ἔργ' ἀμύνουσθιν κατὰ; * it is called Até, the calamity involving a tendency to do wrong, which is followed by suffering. Aias is "so tied and harnessed to an evil fate."†

"Evil ever seems to be as good
To those whose thoughts of heart
God leadeth unto woe,
And without woe, he spends but shortest space of time." ‡

Ἄτῃ meant definitely this punishment by blindness to right and impulse to sin, which was illustrated in the house of the Labdakidæ.

The personified goddesses of retribution were called Erinnyes. These were awful and divine,§ ever mindful of crime and untiring,|| swift,¶ sure,** and crafty †† in punishing it. They had many feet and many hands, so that none could escape them.‡‡ They were the goddesses of just retribution, ποίνιμοι.§§

"They wait,
The slow though sure avengers of the grave,
The dread Erinnyes of the mighty Gods,
For thee in these same evils to be snared." |||

Such passages might be cited indefinitely to illustrate a thought about which the Greek tragedy as a whole centres. The three Œdipus plays put on the stage three scenes in the downfall of the Labdakidæ, three scenes illustrating three prolific broods of sin and suffering which come from sin. Aias presumed to attempt the lives of the leaders of the army, and what suffering it brings! His father must lose an only son; his barbarian wife, so dearly beloved, and the infant boy, become but a slave-woman with babe to suffer with her; his

* *Phil.* 601, 602.

† *Ai.* 123.

‡ *Ant.* 622-625.

§ *Ai.* 837; *El.* 112.

|| *Ai.* 130; *El.* 491.

¶ *Ai.* 837, 843.

** *Ant.* 1074; *Ai.* 1034.

†† *Tr.* 1051; *Ant.* 1075; *Fr.* 508.4; *Ai.* 1034.

‡‡ *El.* 491.

§§ *Ai.* 843; *Tr.* 809; *Ant.* 1075.

||| *Ant.* 1074-1076.

brother-in-law, and the sailors of Salamis have no one to lead and protect them,—when honor demands the suicide of Aias.

Greek dramas were not sermons, but dramas with dramatic purpose and dramatic interest. Yet the religious element never faded out, for the current of life-events with which they dealt was determined by the gods, or rather its power was personified in the gods. This was the deepest thought they found in the world, and as such it stirred them intensely. As such it was almost the only possible key-note for a great tragedy.

The question of atonement, or redemption from sin, is hardly a question of ethics, nor does it belong to tragedy. The punishment of sin was the natural sequence of sin, and laws of nature are inviolable. Only sin against God can be forgiven by God. Right-doing may correct the evil tendencies that remain, but it does not cheat law of its penalty.

Œdipus was an exemplary ruler, but this did not abate the years of suffering and shame. We do find, however, that the penalty of sin spends its force in suffering, and that suffering has a sort of purifying influence. For Elektra and Antigone we feel that suffering has purified the character. Antigone dies, but for Elektra, the curse of the race has spent itself in suffering; her spirit is moulded into sympathy with law and the government of the world. Philoktetes sinned by presumption, and only after ten years of solitary suffering is he fitted to take a necessary, important place in the capture of Troy. The moral sense of Greece recoiled from the evil in which Œdipus was involved, quite as much as we do to-day. Yet when he had wandered for many years in solitude, want, and shame, the moral sense of Greece recognized the effect of this on character. The Œdipus at Kolonos is a drama of reconciliation. Chastened and ennobled by suffering, he appears almost divine in the favors he is to bring to Attika; but the sons of evil still remain to do and to suffer wrong.

III.

The ideal man for Sophokles.

In the first *stasimon* of the *Antigone*, after praising man's power as shown in his control of earth and sea and animals, Sophokles sings:

“ And speech, and thought as swift as wind,
 And tempered mood for higher life of states,
 These he has learnt, and how to flee
 Or the clear cold of frosts unkind,
 Or darts of storm and shower,
 Man all providing. . . .
 So, gifted with a wondrous might,
 Above all fancy's dream, with skill to plan,
 Now unto evil, now to good
 He turns. While holding fast the laws,
 His country's sacred rights,
 That rest upon the oath of Gods on high,
 High in the state; an outlaw from the state,
 When loving, in his pride,
 The thing that is not good;
 Ne'er may he share my hearth, nor yet my thoughts,
 Who worketh deeds of evil like to this.” *

Man's life is indeed intertwined with many other lines in the course of cosmic events. Few people have recognized the force of influences now called heredity and environment, as did the Greeks. These two influences were objectified in that stream of constantly exercised power, that dark background of life, if not its source, which is called fate. But man has a liberty beyond fate. Each sin that is fated has also its reason in his own character. Each excellence is self-won.

The quality most admired in man seems to be largeness of soul, a wide interest in the world, a noble, wise self-assertion.

Odysseus, with all that is tricky and mean, has a breadth of purpose and a success in carrying out his aims in every line that is attractive to the Greek. Orestes undertakes to avenge his father by slaying the king who usurped his throne, and shows that he is the man for the deed. Aias is a very Greek

* *Ant.* 354-375.

in this particular, vigorous, impetuous, with large desires and large power of satisfying them, with a sense of honor which could brook no insult. Single-handed he had rescued Agamemnon from the very stroke of Hektor; and it is the same man who would now slay Agamemnon to revenge his wrongs. There is a touch of barbarism in the man and in the ideal he represents, but the world is not yet beyond admiring greatness and energy. Œdipus also found keen sympathy with an Athenian audience. His very faults of noble impetuosity were faults that leaned towards virtue in the estimation of a Greek. He was so true a king, so watchful for every interest of his people and earnest in his efforts to do them good, so broad and so earnest a man. The same refined taste which made the Greek sense of duty æsthetic, introduced this standard of judgment here. The æsthetic ideal of character first demanded force and vigor, largeness of soul (*μεγαλοψυχία*).

And secondly, the æsthetic ideal of character demanded proper balance. Much of what was said of sin as the result of self-assertion might be repeated here. *Σωφροσύνη* was the check and balance corresponding to *μεγαλοψυχία*. For the perfect man, all faculties and powers stand in perfect balance. It is not unnatural that this phase of the ideal should be emphasized in the drama mainly by condemnation of sins against it. It was not the function of tragedy to depict perfect life, but that which appeals to men more deeply, grandeur of character in unfavorable circumstances.

The ideal man is *truthful* and *sincere*. The case of Neoptolemos, son of Achilles, shows that the Greeks with all their natural cunning knew the meaning of these words. The wily plans of Odysseus fail. Aias marching on the commanders by stealth goes mad. Herakles's death is attributed to treachery in slaying an enemy, while Zeus had always cared for his son in honorable contests.

It is only from poetry that we learn of *love* and *tenderness for one's family* as a Greek trait. The *Maidens of Trachis* turns on the unrestrained, intense love of Deianeira for her husband. The love of Elektra for her long-absent brother is beautifully depicted in those scenes where a false account of

his death is recited in her hearing. The one bit of mildness and light in the *Aias* is the love of the fierce, brave warrior for the little son and his mother who had been a slave-woman. Death would be only pleasure instead of a necessity, if it did not bring pain to them. And Œdipus is as intense in his love for his wife and children as in reference to any great action. I need but refer to the scene where he meets his daughters just after having blinded his eyes.

The Greeks were enough a political people to recognize *devotion to the state* as an indispensable virtue; they were religious enough to make *reverence for the gods* an essential feature of their ideal. The whole public life of Œdipus testifies to the former, and indeed to the latter also. The Greek drama was religious in its origin, and breathes a religious spirit throughout. It was addressed to a political people, so that political virtue was never lacking in its approved ideals.

There are two types of women in Sophokles,—Antigone and Elektra on the one hand, Ismene, Chrysothemis, Deianeira, etc., on the other. Elektra and her sister, Chrysothemis, will serve as examples. Their mother has joined Ægisthos in slaying her husband Agamemnon, and the guilty pair rule in Mykenæ. Elektra's younger brother, Orestes, was saved by her care, and is her hope and their fear. Elektra and Chrysothemis live in the palace, but under constant indignities, with menial fare,—and having the family crime constantly before them. Elektra is by far the stronger. Her passions are deeper and more controlling, both the love for her father and brother, and that love for her mother which has become as intense a hatred since its betrayal. The thought of her father is constantly in her mind, and her love seeks revenge for him. Perhaps the most beautiful scene of the play is her recognition of that brother whom she had heard was dead, and the careless joy which might have wrought the ruin of them both but for the watchfulness of his attendant. The intensity of her moral feeling is evident in the noble speech answering her mother's attempt to defend her sin, and again in her condemnation of her sister for not laying aside woman's

nature to avenge this crime. Many years she waited for Orestes to come and do his work of vengeance, and she saw only sorrow in the life which opened before her. The news of Orestes's death throws her on her own responsibility; she steels herself to action; the woman sinks before the soul and its duty,—she feels herself the instrument of divine justice. Intensity of emotion for the right, and single persistence in pursuit of it, condemn her sister, support her in adversity, and impel to action.

Such stern characters demand a milder counterpart as a foil, and as a relief, lest we forget that the play deals with human life. Chrysothemis, like Ismene, is more a woman, and more a Greek. She is Elektra's sister; we find the same traits of character, but her nature is not strong enough to carry her burden, or, indeed, to realize it. She is first a woman, and the difficulties in the way of unwomanly action are insurmountable; bounds set by nature define the limits of what law, natural or divine, can prescribe. She is one with whom the hearer can sympathize, when her sister kindles, the rather, a lofty enthusiasm in his breast.

As to the results of this investigation, we may say again that these ethical ideas are the product of that age. Moral reflection is characteristic of the Greeks; our records of it date back to the seven wise men. Discussion of action and theories of action interested a philosophic people even more than theories of the world. The moral code was developing towards the results in Plato and Aristotle. We should say, further, that the thoughts we find in Sophokles were undoubtedly far in advance of the actual ideals of his age, although but a development of these. Moral progress is ever introduced by great leaders, whose thoughts are realized only long after they have lived. Sophokles was such a leader, and his doctrines of law and duty, of sin and punishment, find truer sympathy to-day than when offered to his own people.

Much progress in ethical thought as Sophokles made, guided by a poet's intuition, he did not break through the

sphere of Greek thought. His ideals, his conceptions of virtue and duty, may even yet be ideal and unrealized, but they are Greek in that their stand-point is æsthetic rather than ethical. A grand fault is approved more than a weak virtue. Herakles, in rage and pain slaying his attendant, his wife Deianeira, with her depth of passionate love, are more attractive than their perfect son. The sense of shame can at best only condemn what an educated popular taste condemns. Once assume this æsthetic stand-point, however, and the results reached can never cease to excite wonder and admiration. That combination of mental vigor, and sympathy with nature and life which produced Greek art may never be repeated; and the adequate successes of æsthetic morals are limited to those naïve beginnings of highest culture, before knowledge and cool calculation have supplanted life,—before the world of science has supplanted nature. Then right and wrong was instinctive for the “perfect” man, and his whole nature joined in the revolt against wrong; but ideas of right and wrong were limited by the point of view. The sublime and the beautiful in action excited moral admiration. Conscience was sense of conformity to an æsthetic ideal. The eternal relations of things, *natural law in the moral world*, embodied the æsthetic ideal. It was reserved for a sterner people than the Greeks to give its true meaning to the “ought,” to turn attention beyond the best that *is* to what may be and must be.

ARTHUR FAIRBANKS.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.